

Adams Country

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TIMES

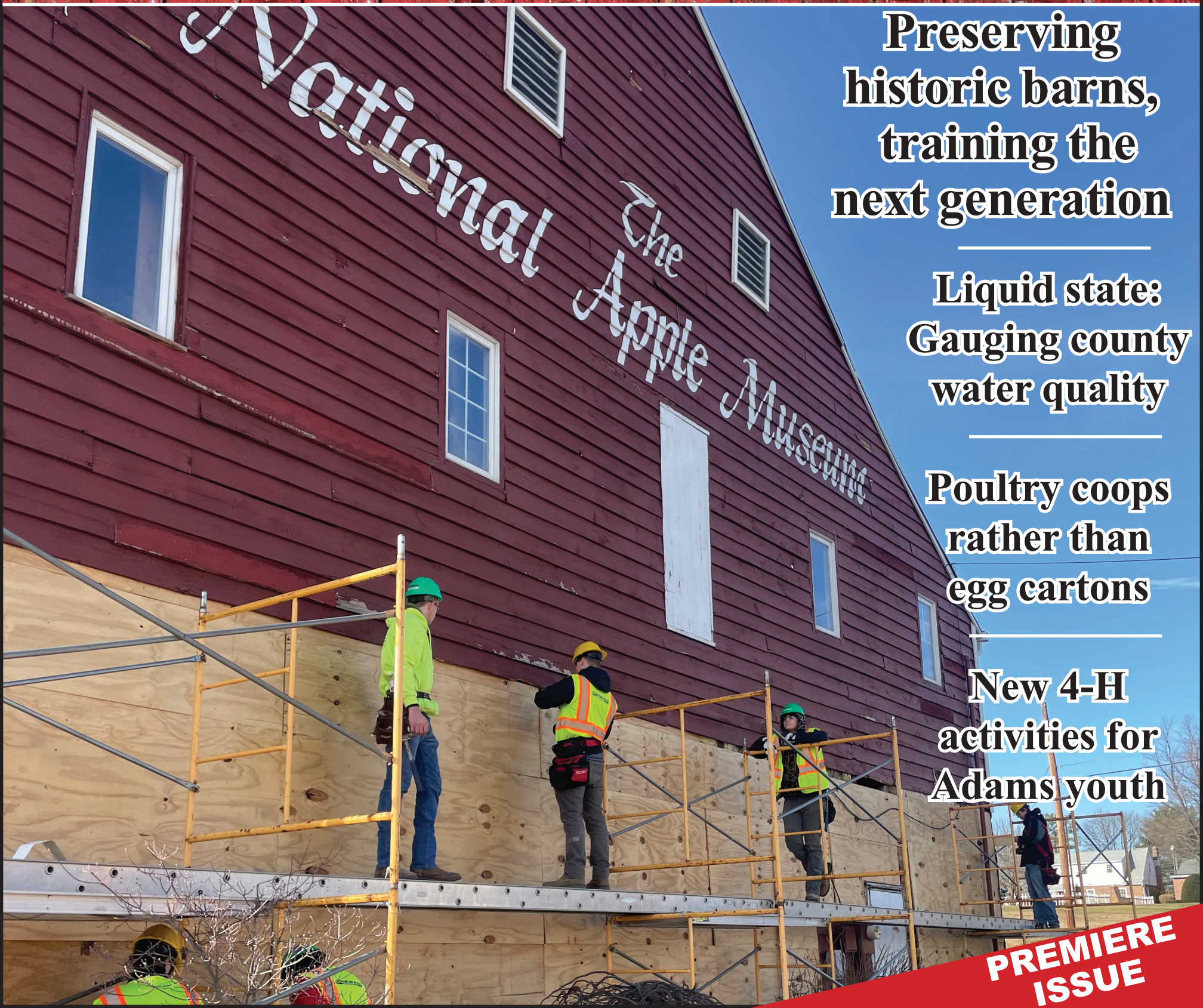
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activities for
Adams youth**

**PREMIERE
ISSUE**



Country View

Welcome to the premiere edition of Adams Country.

Andy Andrews



Many of us don't know what our neighboring farm communities are doing or planning to do. Many of our readers love rural living and want a life that is robust, connected to nature and emotionally meaningful.

For the farm and rural life community to those who just enjoy the fruits of their labor, Adams Country will offer something for everyone. From barn renovation to backyard coops and from water quality to high-quality and engaging county 4-H and FFA programs, our ambitions are simple: you live and work in the rural areas of greater Gettysburg and your way of living means a lot to you. And the Gettysburg Times as well. We use this venue as a way to showcase how much that

means.

Please be aware that this mid-monthly publication is a work in progress and, like the sweet corn seed sown, it will take on more robust shape in the months to come

From gardening to bird watching, opportunities abound in Adams County. There are many agencies and organizations in the county to assist in providing meaningful activities and programs for you and your family to experience. Just a few are the Gettysburg Foundation and the Penn State Adams County Extension Service. Check the calendar on Page 3.

Plans for upcoming issues will include features and news coverage of farm markets, antique tractors and barn storage, a fair season preview, apple harvest events, fishing, hunting and decorative fashions of the Christmas season. We'll even promote state Farm Show as well.

Initially, we plan to publish once a month, on Wednesdays. Our next issue is planned for April 15.

Join us as we celebrate the best of Adams

Country.

Andy Andrews is editor of the Gettysburg Times.

On the cover

Adams County Technical Institute (ACTI) 12th-grade building trades students install plywood sheathing on the east gable wall of the historic Ditzler Barn at 154 West Hanover Street in Biglerville, which houses the National Apple Museum. The work is part of a partnership between ACTI and Historic Gettysburg Adams County's (HGAC) Barn Preservation Project through the Bonnie Braun Investing in Youth Initiative. ACTI instructor Dave Snyder and HGAC barn preservation specialist David Maclay guide students as they repair the wall and prepare it for restoration work. (Photo courtesy of David Maclay)

Pennsylvania 4-H Week

MARCH 15-21, 2026



Adams County 4-H Clubs

Community clubs:

Barlow
New Oxford

Specialty clubs:

East Berlin Shooting Sports
Teen Senate

County wide animal clubs:

Beef
Goat
Poultry
Sheep
Livestock Cloverbuddies



Fairfield
Homeschool

Littlestown Shooting Sports

Dairy & Dairy Beef
Horse
Rabbit
Swine

Thank You!

Thank you for your continued support of the Adams County 4-H Program.

For more information on any of our clubs, please call our office and we can put you in touch with the club leader, as each club is operating differently.

Follow us on Facebook for upcoming opportunities.



4-H Clubs of Adams County, Inc. & Penn State Extension:

670 Old Harrisburg Road, Suite 204
Gettysburg, PA 17325
Phone: 717-334-6271
Email: AdamsExt@psu.edu



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Pennsylvania



Find us on the web!
<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/4-h/counties/adams>



PennState Extension



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extension.psu.edu

Administered in Pennsylvania by Penn State Extension, 4-H is a community of more than 6 million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Penn State Extension 4-H youth development educators in all 67 counties throughout the commonwealth administer local 4-H programs through non-formal education and outreach. To find your local program, visit the Penn State Extension website at <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/4-h>.

Banking on Agriculture

Orchards, crop fields and pastures are a staple in the Adams County landscape.

Andrea D. Foore



We are fortunate to live in an area with programs that protect these pre-

cious acres. According to the Adams County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, 230 farms composed of 26,830 acres have already made the choice to safeguard their land through various programs.

Farmland preservation is important in maintaining food security, supporting wildlife and biodiversity, localizing economic benefits

and carrying on our community heritage. To lose farmland in Adams County would be to lose part of our identity.

For these reasons, and as an agribusiness lender who lives in our community, I have always supported my customers who apply for preservation programs. I've seen how each situation is unique and why it's important to have a conversation with your lender and your accountant before you apply for a program.

Your lender will guide you through your bank's review, which likely includes signing a subordination to the preservation easement and processing the easement offer documents. Your lender will also discuss how the easement proceeds will be used, whether paydown on your mortgage is required, your other current debt and any special requirements for your unique situation. If, for example, your

property has a Farm Service Agency direct loan or guarantee, there could be additional requirements before you proceed.

Your accountant can advise you on capital gains taxes and other financial implications of the easement sale.

It is important to reach out to these business partners at the beginning of the process so that you are well informed of the impact of your choices.

The opportunity to protect our rich, natural resources is important. If you are interested in preserving your farm, consider reaching out to your local Agricultural Land Preservation Program. They will be able to provide the guidelines and process for application.

Andrea D. Foore is an assistant vice president/agribusiness loan officer for ACNB Bank.

Adams Country Calendar

Friday, March 20, 2026: Adams County 4-H Strawberry Plant Sale. Adams County 4-H is holding a strawberry plant sale, offering five varieties of strawberries. All orders are due by March 20 and pickup will be on April 9 from 1 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. or April 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Proceeds support 4-H programming, which serves youth in Adams County. All strawberries are sold as bare-root plants in bundles of 25 plants, \$10 per bundle. For more information and to order, contact the Adams County Extension Office at 717-334.6271.

Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 10 a.m. to noon: Let's Cook for Weight Management. Learn how to prepare a healthy meal to support weight management. "Let's Cook for Weight Management" is a cooking class that provides practical tips for healthy eating. Participants will explore basic principles of weight management, including strategies to reduce calories while maintaining satiety. In this hands-on class, participants will cook alongside Penn State Extension educators to prepare a meal designed with weight management in mind. The session will also introduce new recipes and practical cooking techniques. Cost is \$30. Located at Gettysburg Ag & Natural Resource Center, 670 Old Harrisburg Rd, Suite 204, Gettysburg, PA 17325. For more information and to register, go to <https://extension.psu.edu/lets-cook-for-a-healthy-heart> or call 1-877-345-0691.

Monday, April 13, 2026, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: ServSafe. The ServSafe® Food Safety Program is for individuals who are serving as man-

agers or are in a supervisory role requiring certification. Upon successful completion, participants will receive the ServSafe® Food Protection Manager Certificate. Training meets the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture requirements for the Food Employee Certification Act. The requirements for a Certified Food Protection Manager under the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Food Employee Certification Act will be changing. Until the changes are implemented, the current requirement remains in effect. To receive and maintain certification, individuals are required to pass a certification exam every five years. The ServSafe® Food Safety Manager Course, conducted by Penn State Extension, is for individuals preparing for the food protection certification exam. Completing the ServSafe® Manager Course and passing the ServSafe® Food Protection Manager Certification Examination with a 70% or higher meets this requirement. The workshop costs \$165 and will be located at Gettysburg Ag & Natural Resource Center, 670 Old Harrisburg Rd, Suite 204, Gettysburg, PA. For more information and to register, go to <https://extension.psu.edu/servsafe> or call 877-345-0691.

Thursday, April 23: Earth Day event at the Ag Center in Gettysburg. The Penn State Extension Master Watershed Stewards are joining the Adams County Conservation District to host the second Annual Earth Extravaganza on April 23, 2026, from 3 to 7 p.m. Included are interactive table displays with representatives from 20 environmentally

related organizations; four hour-long workshops (rain barrels, native carnivorous plants, skunks and riparian tree species) plus a children's workshop; face painting; live music; and, perhaps, a food truck. At least two of the three county commissioners will attend and make statements (time to be determined). Last year more than 130 members of the public attended the first event. Admission is free.

Friday, April 24, 2026, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Family Living Day. Plan now to attend the "Adams County Homemaker's Family Living Day 2026," a morning of learning and community connection open to the public. The program features three educational presentations led by local experts. Penn State Extension Educator Mary Ann Ryan will discuss houseplant propagation, including rooting options, types of cuttings, and plants ranging from easy to more challenging. Elsie Morey of the Adams County Historical Society will highlight the society's newest exhibit, "Gettysburg Beyond the Battle." Autumn Thomas of AARP will conclude the program with a presentation on scam awareness. Participants are invited to enjoy an engaging and informative experience designed to support lifelong learning and community engagement. Light morning refreshments are included with registration. The workshop costs \$5 and will be located at Gettysburg Ag & Natural Resource Center, 670 Old Harrisburg Rd, Suite 204, Gettysburg, PA. For more information and to register, go to <https://extension.psu.edu/introduction-to-permaculture> or call 1-877-345-0691.

Preserving historic barns, training the next generation

By Liz Caples
Times Staff Writer

Local high school building trades students are learning historic preservation skills, with a 19th-century barn serving as their classroom through a partnership designed to keep historic preservation trades alive while repairing real structures that still serve the Adams County community.

Historic Gettysburg Adams County (HGAC) and Adams County Technical Institute (ACTI) have collaborated to create a special curriculum that exposes ACTI building trades students to historic construction techniques such as timber framing, joinery and masonry, which are the same skills used to build many of the county's historic barns, according to Greg Kaufmann, vice president of HGAC.

The curriculum is part of the Bonnie Braun Investing in Youth Initiative, known as I2Y, which was launched in 2019 after HGAC's late vice president Bonnie Braun discovered just how difficult it could be to find skilled artisans trained in historic trades while she and her husband were restoring their early-1800s home and barn in Adams County, Kaufmann said.

"She discovered how hard it was to find artisans that were trained and competent in the historic trades to restore these structures that are 150 to 200 years old," Kaufmann said.

Braun noticed that even when she located timber framers and masons schooled in historic preservation trades, their services often came with long wait times, according to HGAC's Investing in Youth narrative documents. She became concerned that building trades students were not being taught or encouraged to pursue preservation skills such as



Linkin Heagy from the Adams County Technical Institute removes the old nails from the beams in the Ditzler Barn in Biglerville. It is the home of the National Apple Museum. (Darryl Wheeler/Gettysburg Times)

timber framing and masonry, according to the narrative documents.

Braun launched I2Y to expose students to historic preservation trades and to introduce them to a possible career path in historic preservation and restoration, Kaufmann said.

"The program is hands-on and allows students see these historic construction techniques firsthand inside of old barns," Kaufmann said.

I2Y grew out of HGAC's Barn Preservation Project, which was launched in 2003, according to the HGAC website. In 2005, HGAC received a grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to help establish the Adams County Barn Registry, according to the website.

Now, nearly seven years after I2Y began, Kaufmann said the initiative has become a regionally recognized year-long program for ACTI's building trades students and their instructor, Dave Snyder, with about 15 students taking the course each year.

ACTI serves 11th- and 12th-grade students from Bermudian Springs, Conewago Valley, Gettysburg, Littlestown and Fairfield school districts, offering a variety of two-year vocational and technical programs.

"It starts each October when the Gettysburg Foundation allows us to use its historic George Spangler Barn as a classroom, or 'learning lab,'" Kaufmann said.

The Spangler barn dates to the mid-19th century and was used as a field hospital during the Battle of Gettysburg, according to the Gettysburg Foundation website. The barn was restored in 2015, according to the website.

"The lessons start with assessing the barn, and then students learn about the building techniques that encompass the entire structure. We wanted to put the kids in a hands-on, real-life setting that hopefully makes them consider a career in historic preservation," Kaufmann said.

Kaufmann said three professional timber framers and a stone mason guide lessons and cover the construction techniques needed to build and restore old barns.

Students also build a small "bent," two posts and a beam held together with mortise-and-tenon joints and knee braces for strength, to replicate a section of a barn's structural framework, Kaufmann said.

In the spring, students travel to the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center in Frederick, Maryland, where experienced preservationists teach additional skills such as cedar shingling, mortar pointing and



From left, Emma Haines, Isabella Fair and Keegan Yost remove nails from the old siding that was taken off the Ditzler Barn in Biglerville. (Darryl Wheeler/Gettysburg Times)

window glazing, Kaufmann said.

"The students to learn about career possibilities with the preservationists and tour the facility," Kaufmann said.

Now, the "real job" component of the program is taking place at the historic Ditzler Barn, located at 154 W. Hanover St., Biglerville, which houses the National Apple Museum. Since November 2025, ACTI building trades students have been repairing and painting an exterior wall under the supervision of Snyder and HGAC barn preservation specialist and timber framer David Maclay, Kaufmann said.

"They're actually out working with real materials on a real job that needs to be done correctly," Kaufmann said.

The work focuses on the barn's east gable wall, which needs repairs because it has come out of plumb, Maclay said.

The students are assessing conditions and replacing posts, beams, siding and insulation as needed, with Maclay guiding the repairs, Maclay said. Students are also learning tasks such as rotted sill replacement through the project, Maclay said.

"These students are learning skills that wouldn't be possible to teach in a traditional classroom setting," Maclay said.

"It's a collaborative effort. The ACTI students get hands-on experience and a chance to practice their skills on an old barn, and in the process, the barn, which is home to the museum, gets repaired," Maclay said.

Work continues as students travel by bus to the site for afternoon work sessions as their schedules and weather permit, Snyder said.

The Ditzler Barn is No. 265 on the HGAC Historic Barn Registry and was honored with

the 2021 HGAC Barn Preservation Award, according to the HGAC website. The restored pre-Civil War bank barn, built around 1857, was renovated to create room for the museum and has been maintained by the Biglerville Historical and Preservation Society (BHPS), which owns and operates the museum.

Funding for the Ditzler Barn repair project was made possible through the sponsorship of the Gettysburg Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR).

In April 2025, BHPS received a \$9,512.50 Historic Preservation matching grant from the Gettysburg Chapter of the NSDAR that supported restoration of the museum's eastern wall siding that students are working on alongside Maclay, according to a Jan. 8 post on the National Apple Museum website's blog.

"As a volunteer with BHPS for six years now, I realize how much in our community is accomplished by volunteers. By ACTI students volunteering their service with us, we are able to keep a great historic barn able to continue sharing the story of our great Northern Adams County through the National Apple Museum. What they learn on this project will bless them with future marketable historic preservation knowledge and skills," Edy Sarnoff, BHPS and National Apple Museum volunteer wrote in a statement provided

to the Gettysburg Times.

Kaufmann said he hopes the program inspires some students to pursue careers in preservation and restoration as the demand for skilled artisans continues.

"I've known of a few former students who have joined preservation firms. The job opportunities are out there," Kaufmann said.

For students interested in the field, Kaufmann said the typical path includes completing an apprenticeship that can take several years before becoming a journeyman, which he described as a worker who has completed an official apprenticeship qualification and is considered fully qualified in a trade but not yet a master craftsman, Kaufmann explained.

The work is especially significant in a county with a large number of historic barns.

"The Ditzler Barn is one of approximately 1,500 barns in Adams County alone," Kaufmann said.

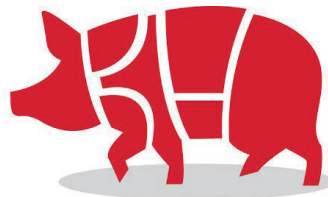
Braun passed away in 2023, but her legacy continues through I2Y. To make a donation toward I2Y, visit <http://www.hgaonline.org>.

HGAC is a nonprofit formed in 1975 focused on preserving, restoring and protecting the historic structures and heritage of Adams County, according to the organization's website.

Readers may contact Liz Caples at ecaples@gettysburgtimes.com.



Adams County Technical Institute (ACTI) 12th-grade building trades students work from scaffolding as they install sheathing and make repairs to the east gable wall of the Ditzler Barn in Biglerville, home of the National Apple Museum. (Photo courtesy of David Maclay)



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Backyard poultry producers continue despite bigger uptick in bird flu

By Tara Hayes

For the Gettysburg Times

More Adams County residents are trading grocery store egg cartons for backyard poultry coops, but the same forces driving that trend are also fueling an uptick in Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreaks throughout Pennsylvania.

According to Dr. Ashley E. Bigge, Penn State Extension poultry educator, egg price fluctuations and disruptions in egg availability during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing outbreak of HPAI, have been two of the main factors driving the increase in backyard poultry producers. “Poultry keeping is also appealing to homesteaders with small properties and youth interested in animal projects,” she said in an email interview. “Adams County has a good variety of poultry. I often see small and backyard flocks on my commute.”

While the current HPAI outbreak has been ongoing since February 2022, industry experts are concerned about an increase in cases during the current waterfowl migration. Wild birds are natural carriers of avian influenza viruses and bird migration enables the disease to be spread over vast distances, according to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. The disease also can be spread by legal and illegal movement of infected birds, poultry products, contaminated materials equipment and vehicles if appropriate biosecurity precautions are not taken.

“This virus continues to test our industry, and we have been responding aggressively from Day 1,” said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding in a press release. “When cases rise, we intensify. Our teams are on the ground immediately, our labs have increased testing capacity and have expedited results to support the response, and we are coordinating daily with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and industry leaders. At the same time, we need every producer to double down on biosecurity — vigilance on the farm is the strongest defense. We are fully mobilized. We will continue deploying every available resource to protect Pennsylvania farms, and we need every producer to stay alert and proactive as we confront this evolving threat together.”

Backyard poultry flocks can be in danger of becoming infected with HPAI, even if the property has no body of water for migrating birds to rest.

“Birds fly overhead, and their droppings end up on roofs, sidewalks, in yards and on

other surfaces,” Bigge said. “Disease can also be spread via dirty boots, vehicles, clothing, equipment and pests.”

According to the Penn State Extension website, flocks can experience a 100% mortality rate and the disease is spread by contact with an infected bird’s feces or saliva. Because the illness can be spread to mammals, including humans, the Game Commission does not advise that the public handle any abnormal, injured, sick or dead wildlife unless authorized to do so.

Bigge recommends that backyard poultry farmers have a biosecurity plan in place before birds arrive, noting that Penn State Extension can help create the plan. Resources and contact information can be found at extension.psu.edu/avian-influenza.

Penn State Extension also provides an online course for those wanting to learn more about

backyard poultry.

“HPAI is a serious risk to all poultry, but especially to birds with outdoor access,” Bigge said. “During high-risk periods, such as waterfowl migration, it is recommended to keep poultry indoors. Good biosecurity practices reduce the risk for all flock sizes.”

Beyond looking into township laws and requirements for owning backyard poultry and selling their products, Bigge reminds any future flock owner that poultry require daily care.

“The associated input costs can sometimes surprise flock owners,” she said. These costs include, but are not limited to, housing, biosecurity, nutrition, water quality, feed and water delivery, ventilation, lighting, manure and waste management, integrated pest management, poultry behavior and health.

Bigge also recommends creating a space to isolate birds who are sick or injured, or to use as a quarantine area for new birds or exhibition birds returning from a show. Regardless, all areas should be easy to clean and accessible to both the birds and their caretakers.

“All flock owners should become familiar with the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System (PADLS),” Bigge said. “The labs do not treat animals but can determine the cause of symptoms or mortality.”

Resources and emergency phone numbers for when avian influenza is suspected or when the flock experiences sudden, unexplained mortality are found on Penn State Extension’s Avian Influenza webpage.

Birds infected with HPAI can exhibit neurologic signs, such as swimming or walking in circles, tilting their heads in an unnatural position, tremoring, seizing or having difficulty flying. Flock owners can also look out for:

- A sudden increase in mortality (may see mortality without any other clinical signs).
 - Decreased feed and/or water consumption.
 - Decreased energy (lethargy, depression).
 - Decreased egg production.
 - Soft-shelled, thin-shelled, or misshapen eggs.
 - Swelling or purple discoloration of the head, eyelids or legs (shanks and/or feet).
 - Difficulty breathing.
 - Coughing, sneezing and/or nasal discharge.
 - Incoordination, stumbling.
 - Abnormal position and/or twisting of the head and neck.
 - Diarrhea.
- Governor Josh Shapiro and his adminis-



A backyard chicken coop on display at the 2026 Philadelphia Flower Show. (Photo courtesy of Karen Stoeckl)

tration are working closely with the USDA, commonwealth veterinarians and employees, Penn State Extension experts and the Pennsylvania National Guard Civilian Support Team in response to the recent spike in HPAI infections.

The administration will also be deploying additional commonwealth employees to procure additional resources for testing and aggressive biosecurity efforts.

“Under the leadership of Secretary Russell Redding, we are working collaboratively with our federal partners, local communities and the poultry industry on a coordinated response and we will continue to make available the resources necessary to mitigate the impacts of HPAI,” Shapiro said in a press release. “I know farmers are worried given the recent increase in cases, but I want them to know that my administration is standing with them and continuing our aggressive response to protect Pennsylvania flocks.”

The Pennsylvania Game Commission requests that any sick or dead domestic birds be reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-772-2852. Any person who has had contact with a sick or dead bird should contact their primary care physician or the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 877-724-3258.



A backyard coop in Lancaster County. (Photo courtesy of Ashley Stoeckl)



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Liquid state: When it comes to water safety, quality, what's the lay of the land?

By John Spangler

For the Gettysburg Times

If water safety is on your mind, Adams County residents enjoy a good lay of the land.

As Gettysburg Municipal Authority's chief executive Mark Guise says of the county, "when it rains, it flows out of Adams County." But safe water is a more complex story.

When your surface water supply is like Marsh Creek, with its headwaters up in Ortnanna, your water is less susceptible to industrial runoff and pollution. But there are problems with other sources of pollution, including agricultural waste, fertilizers and naturally occurring toxins that can affect both surface and well-water quality.

The supply of water is also highly dependent on rainfall and demand is growing "aggressively" in recent years, according to Guise, putting the future water supply for Adams County on notice as "definitely dicey."

Guise referred to a 2012 study designating the Marsh Creek and Rock Creek watersheds as a Critical Water Planning Area by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The study concluded the

area enjoys adequate supplies of water under normal conditions but is susceptible to shortages in an extended drought. Future development could exacerbate the problem.

Since the human body is mostly water, the resource remains a critical daily need, and the safety of the water supply is increasingly in the spotlight and more at risk of contamination. The task of keeping water safe has been going on for more than a century.

Century of water treatment

In the first years of the 20th century, typhoid fever was infecting 100 out of every 100,000 Americans. By 1908, the first disinfection of the water supply began in Jersey City, New Jersey, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) archives. The disinfectant was chlorine, and its use resulted in a dramatic reduction of cases from Baltimore to Chicago. By 1920, cases of typhoid were reduced to 33 of 100,000, and most of those were identified as international travelers.

By then, nearly 40 states had established health departments to address issues of water safety. Standards for water quality took another



The Gettysburg Municipal Authority uses pulsator technology at the water filtration plant near Marsh Creek to enhance the water treatment process. (Darryl Wheeler/Gettysburg Times)

step forward in 1948, and the Clean Water Act was passed in 1974.

Public systems

Since 1991, water systems such as Gettysburg Area Municipal Authority has been testing water quality on behalf of residents in the borough and in nearby areas. And while the agricultural industry and other manufacturing histories have made water quality a growing challenge, Adams County residents have both advantages and disadvantages.

Substances that run off into the creeks affect surface water sources, and what goes down into the soil can sometimes stay there, potentially migrating into wells.

When individuals and people on public systems have questions about their water quality, area residents have resources to turn to. One of these is named Karen Kaslow.

Although not a scientist herself, Kaslow focuses on bringing the best of university-based research coming out of Penn State and other research universities and makes it available to everyone. She serves as the Penn State Extension's master watershed steward coordinator and works with a team of volunteers trying to raise awareness and increase knowledge among residents.

Kaslow credited the work of the Adams County Conservation District (ACCD) for promoting best practices among farmers and other area residents to keep high nutrient substances such as nitrogen and phosphorus out of the water supply. Animal waste and many household products can contain phosphorus. Residents who overfertilize contribute to high nutrient levels from runoff from their lawns, leading to problems with surface and well water sources.



The gravity thickener at the Gettysburg water filtration plant near Marsh Creek is designed to handle filter backwash and sludge storage. (Darryl Wheeler/Gettysburg Times)

Here in Adams County, “we’re a lot better off because we are a rural area,” said Kaslow, and the “nutrient testing is showing a general downward trend in stream water.” She attributes the improvement to better stewardship, thanks to the conservation district.

“By living in a rural area, we have less impervious surfaces here,” Kaslow said, and runoff is a major carrier of pollutants. And it’s not just farmers, but she thinks all efforts to employ best practices leads to improving water quality.

Public water systems have standards and mandated testing for some harmful chemicals. Wells putting water into a larger system are often filtered at the well head site. A decade and a half ago, Gettysburg’s Well Number 9, located on the western edge of the United Lutheran Seminary campus, was taken off line because the water coming from the well tested too high in arsenic to be used safely in the water supply. Arsenic is a known human carcinogen and high levels can also contribute to cardiovascular disease and developmental issues in vulnerable populations.

The filters for such treatment were too large for the small cubical building first built for the well, and so it was enlarged and made tall enough to accommodate the new filters. Arsenic occurs naturally in some soil profiles, as



All efforts to employ best practices leads to improving water quality, said Karen Kaslow, Penn State Extension’s master watershed steward coordinator. Kaslow is taking samples of Marsh Creek. (Photo courtesy of Karen Kaslow)

do other toxins treated at well heads, but other chemicals are products of human enterprises and are proving to be an increasing challenge.

Forever chemicals

In January of 2025, East Berlin Area Joint Authority (EBAJA) told residents in their system that the Well Number 1 had tested high for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA), averaging 20 parts per trillion (ppt) well above the maximum contaminant level (MCL) allowed of 14 ppt.

PFOA is one of a number of emergent contaminants known as perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). They are man-made and related to nonstick and stain-resistant coatings for clothing, cookware, carpets and more. Also known as forever chemicals, their particles are extremely small and they do not break down easily. It is likely most people have exposure to these chemicals both in water and outside the water supply, according to the EBAJA January 24, 2025, notice.

Soon after the discovery, EBAJA took Well Number 1 offline, and it remains shut down. The water authority has taken the last year to study its options, purchasing water from other sources to make up the loss of the well’s use, filter the well at the well head, or sell the entire system to another operator.

Filtering is estimated by some to cost \$1.5 million at the wellhead. EBAJA has been in close consultation with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as it studies its options. Forever chemicals are more expensive to filter because they are small particles, measured in parts per trillion.

The DEP website publishes PFAS monitoring of public system quarterly testing on its website at <https://tinyurl.com/5ewvh2zd>.

Private wells

EBAJA discovered it had problems because it was mandated to test for toxins and acting if the tests showed greater levels than the “maximum contamination” level. But if your main water source in your home is a private well, you don’t have the mandated testing on your behalf.

People who get their drinking water from private wells on their property need to take an active role in their water safety and test. “It is urgent for people to understand they are responsible for their own wells,” Kaslow said.

There are resources nearby, according to Kaslow. New Oxford has a state-accredited water testing laboratory where residents with private wells can have their water tested, she said. The ACCD, on Harrisburg Road across from Harrisburg Area Community College, has instructions for taking samples. And once secured, residents deliver their samples to the lab in New Oxford. Kaslow says people can



Karen Kaslow points to the state’s DEP Laboratory Accreditation for guidance to those testing their well water. She’s sampling from Rock Creek (Photo courtesy of Karen Kaslow)

also obtain free kits for test sampling in the Penn State Extension Center and mail them to a lab. She added only certain labs test for PFAS chemicals. The cost of the lab testing depends on the extent of the substances being screened.

There is a growing list of private companies in the testing market as well. But Kaslow points to the state’s DEP Laboratory Accreditation for guidance to those testing their well water.

Emerging contaminants

What remains elusive to water engineers and scientists are the increasing levels of microplastics in the water supply. There are no legal standards yet, in part, because of the difficulty in measuring and filtering for them. Not much is known about the long-term effect on humans. Between what we know can be problems in water safety such as lead, E.coli, arsenic, or PFAS and the less understood emerging contaminants, the safety of the water supply in Adams County will remain top of mind in the months and years ahead.

For more information about the state Department of Environmental Protection, visit ww.pa.gov/services/dep/apply-for-laboratory-accreditation.

To learn more about water quality and protection, visit Penn State Extension, <https://bit.ly/PSUwater>.

Lamenting Sir Lancelot, beloved camel at Mountain Top

By Deb Hahn

For the Gettysburg Times

It was a solemn moment when Pastor Ron Parr of Mountain Top Ministries, 200 Church Road, Orrtanna, received a phone call last week that Sir Lancelot “Lance,” a camel who had been a part of the church’s live nativity scene for many years, had passed.

The first live nativity at Mountain Top Ministries began in 1997.

“The idea for the outdoor nativity was for visitors from all over to come and see the depiction of Jesus Christ in a manger,” said Pastor Ron.

During the past 29 years, three different camels were rented for the nativity. One year, the man who owned the camels brought a second camel along for training. Unfortunately, in 2012, Pastor Ron was informed by that owner that he would no longer allow his camels to participate in the nativity.

Having live animals at the nativity was a huge drawing point for visitors, especially with a camel on site. During a church service, the congregation prayed that a new camel would be found.

The next day, Pastor Parr received a phone call from a businessman in Maryland who owned camels. Arrangements were made for Pastor Ron and his good friend, Bill Arnold,



The camel, Sir Lancelot, or “Lance,” had been a part of the Mountain Top Ministries live nativity scene for many years.

who was an animal enthusiast, to go look at the camels. Arnold would help with the transporting and handling for the nativity, if a camel was chosen.

When they arrived and were looking at the camels in the pasture, one especially caught the eye of Pastor Ron. As the business owner stood there, Pastor Ron called out, “Lance!” The camel lifted his head and padded over to Parr. The owner was perplexed. The camel recognized Parr. It was Lance, the camel that had participated in the nativity years earlier for training. The deal was made for Lance to once again attend the nativity.

Eventually, Lance’s owners decided to retire and travel. Parr and his wife Missy were given the opportunity to purchase Lance. So, they bought Lance and made arrangements for him to stay at the Land of Little Horses in Gettysburg. This would give Lance exposure to people, have lots of animal friends and plenty of space to roam.

In 2025, the owners of Land of Little Horses contacted Parr and told him they were closing the park. The Parrs had to find a new place for Lance. He received a phone call from Theresa McDannell, who owned a farm in Littlestown with her husband Nick. She asked Parr if they could purchase Lance from them. She told Parr that both her and her husband were very fond and attached to Lance. They frequently spent time with him at the Land of Little Horses.

After some thought, the Parrs offered to give Lance to the McDannell’s, with one condition: the church could use him every year for the nativity. The agreement was made and Lance was

transported to his new home.

Parr said, “Nick and Theresa gave him so much love and care every day. He was having the time of his life.”

Parr received a phone call last week from the McDannell’s saying that Lance was down and not eating. A local veterinarian was called in and administered medication. Lance seemed to get better for a bit, then went back down. He was transported to the University of Pennsylvania New Bolton Center in Kennett Square. Two veterinarians on staff specialize in camels. With treatment, Lance appeared to be on the mend, but unexpectedly passed a few days later.

Parr says that he believes Lance was around 26 years old.

“Lance was truly a gift from God,” Parr said. “He did not have a mean bone in his body. People talk about how camels spit and do other things. Lance never did any of that. He loved attention. His favorite food or treat was animal crackers. People would love to pet and feed him animal crackers. He had a very gentle nature. When he was led around sometimes, he would lift his head way up into the air. If you had his lead, you better be ready to let it slide through your hand or you would be lifted up in the air. I think it was his way of saying ‘I will do what you want, but I am still in charge.’”

Parr doesn’t know how many people Lance affected in life. But he does know “many people walked away with wonder in their eyes and a sense of how magnificent one of God’s creatures truly was,” he said.

Sir Lancelot was a gentle giant who will be missed by many.



Pastor Ron Parr and wife Missy with Lance. (Photos courtesy of Ron Parr)

Adams County 4-H offers new programs for youth

By Novalea Eckenroad

For the Gettysburg Times

Three new short-term programs through Penn State Extension Adams County 4-H are giving local youth more opportunities to learn practical skills.

Jenna Waybright, a 4-H youth educator in Adams County, has been involved with the program for several years. She began volunteering with 4-H five years ago and has

served as a full-time educator for the past two years. Waybright oversees the county's community clubs and shooting sports club while also working to develop new programs.

One of the newest opportunities for 4-H youth is a series of SPIN clubs, which stands for Short-Term Special Interest. Unlike traditional 4-H clubs that meet throughout the year and focus on long-term projects, SPIN clubs run from February until July.

"It's not like our other clubs where you meet all year and that's really appealing to kids who just want to learn a new skill," Waybright said.

The three new SPIN clubs this year are the cake decorating club, sewing club and the Future First Responders program.

The cake decorating club meets

once a month. Participants learn different decorating techniques in each session. Their finished cakes are later submitted to the county fair and auctioned, with proceeds benefiting a local charity.

The sewing club meets twice a month and provides students with access to sewing and machines supplied by 4-H. Students work on projects like pillowcases and tote bags, with lessons tailored to both beginner and advanced skill sets.

The new Future First Responders program allows youth to learn about emergency preparedness and volunteering opportunities in their communities. Local professionals, including a game warden, state police and other first responders, visit the club to speak with students.

"Things have become pronounced

after COVID. We saw kids who are withdrawn more. Kids don't have community anymore," said Waybright.

The 4-H programs help fill that gap, according to Waybright.

"4-H is all about empowering the kids. We try to provide spaces where they have their community," Waybright said.

While some clubs have seasonal deadlines, many 4-H programs remain open to new members. Waybright encourages interested individuals to attend a meeting first before enrolling to see if the program is a good fit. The program is seeking volunteers to assist with the new SPIN clubs, specifically the sewing club. For more information about volunteering, contact Waybright.



March garden plan: Top 10 do's and don'ts

For the Gettysburg Times

Top 10 do's:

1. Test your soil before adding fertilizers or amendments.
2. Clean up beds to remove debris, weeds, and overwintered pests.
3. Prune shrubs and trees that bloom on new wood.
4. Start cool-season vegetables indoors for an early jump.
5. Divide perennials that are overcrowded.
6. Sharpen and clean tools for safer, cleaner cuts.
7. Apply pre-emergent weed control at the right soil temperature.
8. Mulch lightly to regulate soil temperature and moisture.
9. Aerate compacted lawns to encourage root growth.
10. Plan your garden layout to rotate crops and maximize space.

Top 10 don'ts:

1. Don't work wet soil — you'll damage its structure.
2. Don't prune spring-flowering shrubs like lilacs or forsythia now.
3. Don't fertilize lawns too early. Wait until active growth begins.
4. Don't plant warm-season vegetables until frost danger has passed.
5. Don't remove all leaf litter — some protects beneficial insects.
6. Don't scalp your lawn when mowing. Keep blades higher.
7. Don't ignore tool maintenance. Dull blades harm plants.
8. Don't overwater early-spring beds. Roots are still waking up.
9. Don't skip labeling seedlings — you'll regret it later.
10. Don't rush — March is for preparation, not perfection.

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